

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 367 CS

Accessories to a Crime

SPONSOR(S): Carroll

TIED BILLS:

IDEN./SIM. BILLS: SB 730

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) <u>Criminal Justice Committee</u>	<u>8 Y, 0 N</u>	<u>Ferguson</u>	<u>Kramer</u>
2) <u>Criminal Justice Appropriations Committee</u>	<u>5 Y, 0 N, w/CS</u>	<u>Sneed</u>	<u>DeBeaugrine</u>
3) <u>Justice Council</u>	<u>9 Y, 0 N</u>	<u>Ferguson</u>	<u>De La Paz</u>
4) _____	_____	_____	_____
5) _____	_____	_____	_____

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

HB 367 CS, referred to as the "Jason A. Gucwa Act," removes the prohibition that prevents family members from being charged as an accessory after the fact if they give aid to a known felony offender with the intent that the offender avoids detection, arrest, trial, or punishment, if they know that the family member has committed a capital, life, first or second degree felony or had been an accessory before the fact. The bill maintains the exemption for family members if the offender's underlying crime is a third degree felony.

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference met on January 9, 2006 and determined that this bill would have an insignificant prison bed impact on the Department of Corrections.

This bill would take effect upon becoming law.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Promote personal responsibility- HB 367 CS imposes criminal penalties for a family member who acts as an accessory after the fact.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Current law:

Section 777.03 (1)(a), F.S., prohibits family members from being charged as an accessory after the fact if they assist a family member that they know has committed a felony¹ in avoiding detection, arrest, trial or punishment. Family member includes any person standing in the relationship of husband or wife, parent or grandparent, child or grandchild, brother or sister, by *consanguinity* or *affinity* to the offender. Consanguinity and affinity are synonymous with blood and marriage.² The underlying legislative purpose is to safeguard the family unit.³ "In other words, the phrase 'by consanguinity or affinity' is merely a substitute for a cumbersome list of 'in-laws' and 'step-relatives' who are entitled to . . . protection."⁴ Thus, 777.03 (1)(a) provides an exhaustive list of protected family members.⁵

Background:

Jason Anthony Gucwa, 29, was found murdered in March of 2003 in Flagler County. Investigators from the Flagler Sheriff's Office, Daytona Beach Police Department, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the State Attorney's Office are continuing to look for Stephen and Wursula Workman as persons of interest in the case. Stephen Workman's mother's home was searched twice for possible evidence linking he and his wife to the crime. Workman was last seen getting off a Greyhound bus in Minnesota. His wife is known to be back in her native Brazil. Stephen Workman's mother is believed to have materially assisted both her son and his wife flee from prosecution.

Proposed changes:

HB 367 CS would remove the prohibition that prevents family members from being charged as an accessory after the fact if they assist a family member that they know has committed a felony or had been an accessory to the crime. This would allow law enforcement to prosecute family members that participate as an accessory after the fact if they know that the family members underlying crime is a capital, life, first or second degree felony. The exemption for family members would remain intact if the offender's underlying crime is a third degree felony.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Names HB 367 CS the "Jason A. Gucwa Act."

Section 2. Amends s. 777.03, F.S., relating to accessories after the fact.

Section 3. Provides an effective date upon becoming law.

¹ This prohibition does not currently apply in cases involving child abuse. See 777.03 (1)(b) F.S.

² See State v. C.H., 421 So.2nd 62, 64 (Fla. 4th DCA 1982).

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

⁵ See Brown v. State, 672 So.2nd 861, 863-64 (Fla. 3rd DCA 1996) (holding immunity does not extend to persons whose sole familial relationship to the offender is that of cousin).

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference met on January 9, 2006 and determined that this bill would have an insignificant prison bed impact on the Department of Corrections.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This bill is exempt from the mandates provision because it is a criminal law.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

On April 11, 2006, the Criminal Justice Appropriations Committee passed HB 367 with one amendment. The amendment extends the prohibition for family members to include capital and life felonies committed by the offender. HB 367 with CS was reported favorably.